

ISSUE 40 | MAR-APR 2005

# ISR

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW

**DO OUR GENES  
DETERMINE  
DESTINY?**

WAR IS HELL

## **VIETNAM: THE QUAGMIRE LAST TIME**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

**Bush Regime,  
Round Two:  
Perspectives  
for Radicals**

**Do Iraqis Have a  
Right to Resist?**

**Capitalism and  
Global Warming**

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MARCH–APRIL 2005 • ISSUE 40

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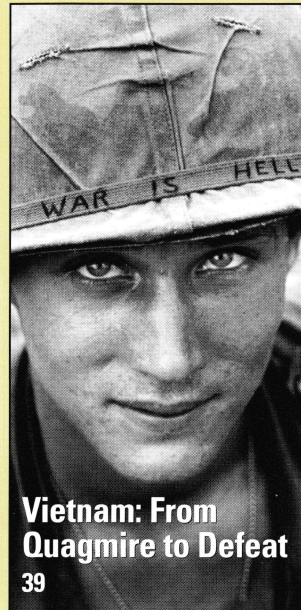
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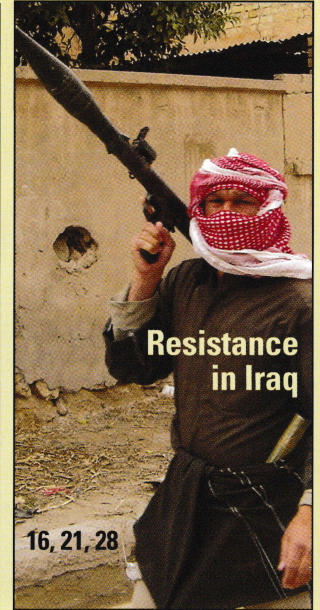
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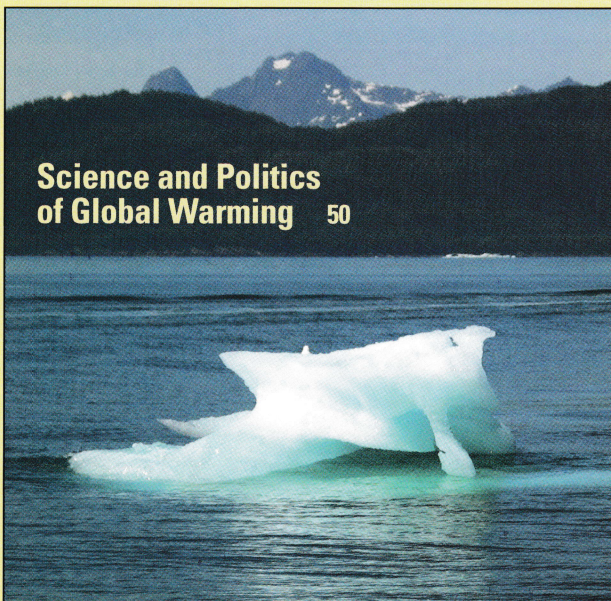
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On the cover: An unidentified American soldier wears a "War Is Hell" sign on his helmet on June 18, 1965, during the Vietnam War. He is with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Battalion on defense duty at Phuoc Vinh airstrip in South Vietnam. (AP Photo/Horst Faas). Cover design by Eric Ruder.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INSIDE BACK COVER



# Letter from the Editors

OUR COVER story is historical, but readers will immediately feel its contemporary significance—the story of how the U.S. was defeated in Vietnam. Exact parallels cannot be drawn between Iraq and Vietnam. There are, however, some lessons to be learned about the nature of U.S. power and the methods used to project it—in both wars the bombing, the house-house-searches, and the use of systematic torture, for example. The war in Vietnam reminds us that a country possessing overwhelming military power can nevertheless be defeated politically.

This issue of the *ISR* raises several related questions facing the Left in the U.S.—the question of where the Bush administration is heading in its second term, both domestically and abroad, the politics of the Left and the antiwar movement in light of Bush's reelection, and the question of the Iraqi resistance.

The Bush Doctrine set out plans that went far beyond Afghanistan and Iraq. Lance Selfa's article examines the original claims of the Bush Doctrine, and the contradictions and pressures, not least of which is the unexpected fierce resistance in Iraq, that are constraining and reshaping the doctrine.

While the Bush administration feels confident after the election, liberals and leftists who chased after Kerry have mistakenly concluded that the country is turning to the right, when in truth, the social polarization that characterized the pre-election period is only intensifying, creating the conditions for struggle against the Bush Agenda. Nevertheless, a clear sense of direction will be crucial if we are not only to rekindle a strong antiwar movement, but also connect the issues of the war with the attack on working-class living standards at home. Allegiance to the Democratic Party, which seems set to lurch further rightward, has had a dampening effect on the antiwar movement. The antiwar movement can revive on a solid footing only if it organizes completely independently from a



party that criticizes Bush on the basis that he needs to send more troops to Iraq. This is the topic of Sharon Smith's article.

A clarity of thinking is also needed on the question of the Iraqi resistance, and so we have included four articles on it by Paul D'Amato, Sami Ramadani, and Michael Schwartz. Islamophobia in the U.S. has created a situation in which even those who oppose the occupation are hesitant to call for immediate withdrawal or support Iraq's right to self-determination. The *ISR* attempts to lay out a case for Iraq's right to self-determination and for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, and, as a corollary, the Iraqi people's legitimate right to resist occupation.

## ABORTION RIGHTS

# From Surrender to Collaboration

AFTER LOSING the 2004 presidential election by running a candidate whose positions on the war and econ-

*International Socialist Review* (ISSN 1097-315X), Issue 40, March–April 2005, published by the Center for Economic Research and Social Change.

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The *ISR* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index, published by the Alternative Press Center. The index is available online at [www.nisc.com](http://www.nisc.com).

The *ISR* is distributed to bookstores through BigTop Newsstand Services • 415-643-0161 • [info@bigtoppubs.com](mailto:info@bigtoppubs.com)

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## ISR INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW

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The books also make plain that the money-making bonanza would not have been possible without the generous help of industry friends in Congress. Mega-chain HCA, Barlett and Steel observe, can thank Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (whose father happens to be HCA's founder) for muscling through the 2003 Medicare "reform" bill that promises to funnel even more public dollars into private coffers.

Angell, a former editor-in-chief of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, points out that the fairly sleepy pharmaceutical industry of the 1960s and 1970s grew into "Big Pharma" with major help from two federal laws that date from the 1980s. One is Bayh-Dole, which lets drug companies license and profit from the publicly-funded research of the National Institutes of Health and university labs while hardly spending a dime of their own. The other is Hatch-Waxman, which extends patents and monopoly rights for top-dollar brand-name drugs while keeping lower-cost generics off the market. Of the \$200-billion-a-year pharmaceutical industry, Angell writes, "If it is not particularly innovative in discovering new drugs, it is highly innovative—and aggressive—in dreaming up ways to extend its monopoly rights."

Naturally, the for-profits have their apologists who claim that the big pharmaceuticals are charging fair prices for innovative and life-saving drugs. Malcolm Gladwell peddled this view recently in the pages of the *New Yorker*, but it's getting harder to sell. When TV's most heavily advertised drugs—Vioxx, Celebrex, and the over-the-counter Aleve—get exposed for their deadly side effects, and when books like *Critical Condition* and *The Truth About the Drug Companies* become bestsellers, it's clear that people are not convinced that this wretched system is as good as it gets.

Both books end with urgent calls for real reform, not more corporate welfare for the insurance and drug industries. Medicare, Barlett and Steele point out, is a prime example of how a universal, single-payer plan has already worked to cover more Americans

for less money—with an average yearly overhead of just 2 percent compared with private insurers' overheads of 15 to 30 percent. In her chapter-long list of needed reforms, Angell includes the closing of legal loopholes so that Big Pharma is forced to develop necessary and innovative drugs instead of more knock-offs of Viagra and Prilosec.

The authors are short on specifics as to how these and other reforms can be won, but they offer plenty of evidence that change won't be handed to us by Congress. After all, Democrats and Republicans alike are the architects and beneficiaries of the current system. "Your representatives in Congress will not deviate much from the industry script unless you force them to," acknowledges Angell, adding that the proof is in the 2003 Medicare reform bill "which was made to order by and for big pharma."

Without strong pressure, the drug companies aren't going to prioritize the development of new antibiotics, chemotherapies, or malaria treatments—all desperately needed, all limited moneymakers. Without strong pressure, the drug companies will continue to launch more designer remedies for chronic conditions such as high cholesterol and heartburn—remedies that, as Angell points out, haven't always proven more effective than the lower-cost treatments they've replaced. Meanwhile, as Barlett and Steele tell us, federal data show that the death rate from cancer remains virtually unchanged from 1950. Without strong pressure, the hospital industry will continue to close emergency rooms where they are most needed while the insurers train phone center operators to say no to patients and doctors seeking approvals for tests and treatments.

While *Critical Condition* and *The Truth About the Drug Companies* don't explain how we can build the pressure we need, both books do an admirable job of showing people that they're not alone in their own miserable experiences with the health care system. They provide us with the strong arguments we need as we organize to fight back.

## Career Advice for Radicals

Jeff Schmidt

### DISCIPLINED MINDS: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System that Shapes their Lives

Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002  
304 pages \$28

#### Review by KYLE GILBERTSON

OVER THE past fifty years the U.S., along with most of the industrialized world, has seen a massive expansion in higher education, accompanied by the growth of an ideology of professionalism. For many, the dream of getting rich quick has been replaced with the dream of becoming a successful professional. Millions of people, fed up with dead-end jobs, spend small fortunes on professional training or graduate school in hopes of leading more fulfilling lives as doctors, professors, lawyers,

scientists, etc. A small minority—not necessarily the most skilled—move on to become highly paid professionals.

In *Disciplined Minds*, Jeff Schmidt looks at the "professional training process" that prepares people to fill the conservative role that the society needs professionals to play. Based on a collection of interviews and correspondence with graduate students from around the country, the book offers a critique of the higher education system and suggests strategies for resistance.

For Schmidt, a professional is defined as an ideological worker. Most workers are not trusted by their employers to think for themselves about problems they encounter at work or to come up with creative solutions. Professionals are the workers trusted to do this, because they have been trained to internalize the worldview of their employers. When determining who will make a good professional, specific skills—for example, skills in journalism, knowledge of science or math—are often not as impor-

tant as attitude and outlook.

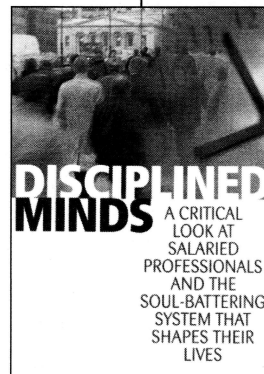
Professionals are self-adjusting. When confronted with a new situation or an unexpected question, the "expert" can usually be trusted to come up with new justifications, new spin that serves the interests of the employer—as if it were second-nature. In return, professionals enjoy the psycholog-

ical reassurance that comes with having some degree of control over their work, the respect of the community, and sometimes a paycheck to match.

Testing, according to Schmidt, is the most important feature of the training process. Professional qualification exams have the effect of alienating the student from the subject matter. This is accomplished by force-feeding massive amounts of often

trivial information which must then be regurgitated, within strict time limits, making it impossible to reflect and think critically or creatively about the material.

Under these conditions, students who initially take a genuine, enthusiastic interest





in their field of study tend to end up seeing it simply as work that must be done. The big exam appears to the student as a temporary obstacle to overcome on the way to realizing one's dreams. In reality, it's the first step in a permanent process of attitude adjustment. The test's function is to prepare students for the alienated labor they must perform in the professional world.

The system's production of "failures" is just as important as the "successes." Because of the limited opportunities in our society, the vast majority will not find fulfilling careers. They must be made to blame themselves for this failure if they are to accept their subordinate roles. If the tests are "objective," low scores and failures must be the student's fault.

Students often attend two-year colleges in hopes of transferring to four-year schools, but only 5 percent of them actually do. Of students who enroll in four-year institutions, 50 percent drop out before they graduate, either for financial reasons or because the system discouraged them from continuing, or both. This is not really a failure of the education system. It's how the system is supposed to work.

As individuals, we are practically helpless to challenge the priorities of the education system or to change the policies of an employer. But, organized collectively, we can have an impact. Even well-trained professionals can break with the ruling ideas of our society and join broader movements for social justice. Schmidt uses U.S. Army Field Manual No. 21-78—a manual for prisoners of war (POWs) resisting indoctrination—to offer suggestions for organizing on campus and in the workplace.

As the manual points out, some POWs will actively collaborate with their captors while others will actively resist. The majority will fall somewhere in between. Resisters must form an organization based on solidarity and equality of all members, regardless of army rank, with the aim of winning over the wavering elements. Every trick employed by the captors, and every injustice perpetrated, must be exposed quickly and thoroughly, if possible through an underground publication. Any victory for the movement, even the slightest improvement in prison conditions, can work wonders for morale and should not be underestimated, but rather publicized and utilized to build the movement. Tactical co-operation should not be confused with capitulation to the enemy.

Judging from the contents of this manual—quoted extensively by Schmidt—one wonders if its authors took their lead from *What is to be Done?* by V.I. Lenin!

Schmidt is upfront about arguing for students, workers, and professionals to join radical organizations and subscribe to radical publications. The book's unapologetic stance in favor of organization with

some degree of centralism is a breath of fresh air. The consistent contact and collaboration with like-minded people, which can only be provided by an organization, are essential for any radical-minded person to withstand the pressures of everyday life and remain true to principle.

Schmidt offers insight into the collective psychology of an important section of the middle class and the role they play in proping up the system when there's a low level of class struggle. For example, the well-trained professional will always explain the problems of society in terms of poor decisions made by the powerful in pursuit of universal interests, rather than a conflict of interest between "capital and labor."

"This restricted understanding" argues Schmidt, "renders the professional weak as a force for his own defense and impotent as a force for change in society." Unfortunately, Schmidt never elaborates on "the conflict between capital and labor," and thus fails to provide a context in which "radical professionals" can work to change society. He begins to point in the right direction when he mentions opinion polls taken during the Vietnam War that showed people in lower income brackets and with less education to be more likely to oppose the war. A movement for fundamental change is not likely to be led by a group that Schmidt himself labels "timid professionals." If it is led by the working class, however, its strength can encourage members of the middle class to break from their professional training and put their skills at the service of the movement. This book provides some clues to how such a radicalization process could work.

## A Class Angle on Politics

Michael Zweig, ed.  
**WHAT'S CLASS  
 GOT TO DO WITH IT?**  
 ILR Press, 2004  
 240 pages \$18

### Review by STEVE LEIGH

MICHAEL ZWEIG'S new book, *What's Class Got To Do With It?* is a thought-provoking collection of essays that applies class analysis to race, gender, globalization, and youth.

Zweig starts the book with a summary of some of the findings of his 2000 book, *The Working Class Majority*, which showed

how class division has been swept under the rug by the idea that we are all middle class. In reality, the majority is working class—those who live on their wages, do the basic work of the economy, and have little power to control their jobs or society at large. Their interests are at odds with the capitalists who own the economy and profit off the work that workers do. This understanding can change how we organize.

If we understand class...in terms of power, new relationships and the possibility of new political alignments emerge. They suggest a basis for linking most Americans with the world's have-nots, separating us from the haves in important ways, and opening the door to new approaches to doing politics and building social movements.

This is the greatest strength of the new book. Every essay is an attempt to develop an analysis of a particular issue from a

working-class viewpoint, not just for edification, but as a guide to action. Though the central focus is economic division, Zweig and the other authors understand that workers can only defend their interests if they fight against racism, sexism, and the victimization of immigrants and workers abroad. They stress that the class as a whole

needs to take up these issues, because separate movements alone will not work.

Dorothy Sue Cobble examines the history of women workers as they tried to get the labor movement to oppose their oppression as women. She calls on the labor movement to make the struggle against institutionalized sexism central and criticizes feminists who have focused on the needs of middle- and upper-class women.

Bill Fletcher and R. Jeffrey Lustig examine the destructive effects of racism on working-class unity. Fletcher writes, "The extent to which so-called white workers saw their interests as linked with...the white establishment, was the extent to which class struggle as such was muted." Fletcher calls for "social justice unionism" that can confront "racial capitalism."

Fletcher and Lustig's argument is weakened by an ambiguity about what the real interests of white workers are. Fletcher says, "This class has multiple, often contradictory interests." In reality, the economic basis of winning white workers to oppose racism is that racism hurts *all* workers by dividing the class against itself and making it harder to win higher wages and better conditions. Fletcher and Lustig seem to recognize this

